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YUKON GOVERNMENT REPORT ON

Early Childhood Development

Activities and expenditures

2001-2002

August 2003

Message from the Yukon Minister of Health and Social Services

I am pleased to present the Yukon's report on early childhood development activities for 2001-2002. This report follows from the Yukon baseline report 2000-2001 which identified base government expenditures on young children. This report on the government's activities and expenditures is the first of what will be annual reports to Yukoners on our government's investment in programs and services to support Yukon children. To the extent that data is available, the annual reports will also provide information on the progress of Yukon children.

This report flows from a commitment made in September 2000, when the federal, provincial and territorial governments agreed to form a partnership to increase support to young children and their families. Under this initiative, the Government of Canada will be providing $1.9 million to the Yukon government for investment in early childhood development programs and services over five years. This new investment is specifically targeted at children in the earliest years so that they have the best opportunities to reach their potential.

The Yukon government is committed to providing young children with the necessary supports to help them become healthy and responsible Yukon citizens. Our government believes early supports to children and families are some of the most worthwhile areas for investment. Our strategy of early investment in our children will have long-term benefits for the Yukon.

This report reflects the Yukon government's commitment to keep Yukoners informed about our youngest citizens. We will continue to work towards improved reporting as data becomes available about our children.

While this report outlines the Yukon government's work towards building supports for young children, it is only through the tremendous efforts of Yukon families and our strong communities that we can successfully build a healthy and prosperous future for our children. Yukon is a vital and robust place to live. In partnership with Yukon families and communities, we can continue to make the territory an even better place to raise our children.

Peter Jenkins
Minister, Health and Social Services
August 2003

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PART 1: THE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

BACKGROUND

In September 2000, the Yukon Premier joined First Ministers from across Canada (with the exception of Quebec) in a partnership to improve and expand on programs and services to support young children and their families. The First Ministers reached an agreement to work together so that young children can reach their potential.

The Early Childhood Development (ECD) initiative identifies four key areas for action:

- promote healthy pregnancy, birth and infancy;
- improve parenting and family supports;
- strengthen early childhood development, learning and care; and
- strengthen community supports.

The ECD initiative is supported by increased federal financial contributions to the provinces and territories. Over the five-year period of this initiative, the Yukon government will receive approximately $1.9 million. Nationally, the federal government is providing provincial and territorial governments with $2.2 billion over the five-year period. The allocation of funding is based on a per capita distribution. The table below shows the approximate Yukon allocation based on population estimates.

Approximate Yukon allocation based on population estimates

Fiscal year	Yukon allocation (approximate)	National allocation
2001-2002	$288,000	$300 million
2002-2003	$370,000	$400 million
2003-2004	$447,000	$500 million
2004-2005	$432,000	$500 million
2005-2006	$428,000	$500 million
Total over 5 years	**$1,965,000**	**$2.2 billion**

ANNUAL REPORTING COMMITMENTS

As part of the initiative, governments have agreed "...to report annually to Canadians on their investments and their progress in enhancing programs and services in the four areas...." (ECD Communique, Sept. 2000) The Yukon government began this process by producing a baseline report in 2002. The baseline report (fiscal year 2000-2001) provides an overview of government expenditures in the area of early childhood development prior to the new federal investment. The baseline financial report is restated in Part 4 of this report under Yukon expenditures.

Governments also agreed it is important to report on the well-being of our children over time. The federal, provincial and territorial governments have identified a set of 11 common indicators to report in Annex 1. The indicators focus on five areas of child well-being:

- physical health and motor development (birth weight, incidence of diseases, infant mortality);
- emotional health (hyperactivity, physical aggression);
- social knowledge and competence (prosocial behaviour);
- cognitive learning; and
- language communications.

A NOTE ON REPORTING IN CANADA'S NORTH

Most of the data in the area of physical health and motor development is readily available through health statistics collected in the Yukon. The data source for the other four areas of child well-being is found primarily in the National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth. While many families in the Yukon were part of this study, the Yukon data is compiled with data from the Northwest Territories and Nunavut and reported as data representative of Canada's north. The three territories agree that reporting on child well-being using the aggregated data does not effectively contribute to each government's understanding of the progress of children within each jurisdiction. The Yukon will report more fully on child well-being once data becomes available that reflects Yukon conditions.

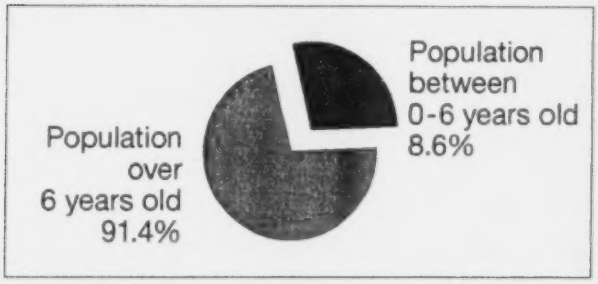
Included in this report are data on the available indicators that contribute to understanding Yukon children. Future reports may provide more information on other indicators as the data become more refined. The territorial and federal governments are working together in an effort to find more effective approaches to reporting that will provide the necessary information to contribute to public policy decisions.

PART 2: YUKON CHILDREN

YUKON POPULATION

The Yukon's total population as at July 2001 was 30,237. This is a drop of 1.7% from the baseline year population of 30,768. This decrease is more significant among children ages 0-6. In 2000, the Yukon had 2,777 young residents, while in 2001 the population dropped to 2,590, a decrease of almost 6.7%.

Yukon population overview, 2001

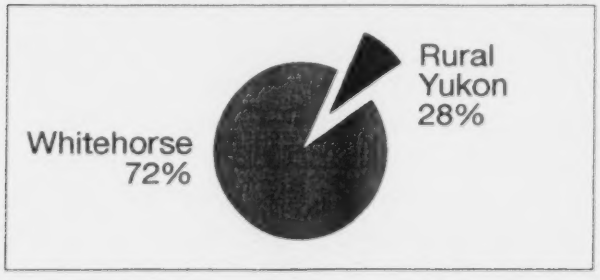


Source: Yukon Bureau of Statistics.

WHERE YUKON CHILDREN LIVE

While the population between the base year and reporting year has changed, the places people choose to live remain constant. The majority of Yukoners live in Whitehorse while roughly a third of the population lives in one of the 16 rural communities. The population of the rural communities can range from about 100 residents to almost 2,000, however, in each of these communities, residents have access to basic services. With the exception of one rural community, all Yukon communities are linked by road.

Where Yukon children live, 2001



Source: Yukon Bureau of Statistics

Whitehorse families have access to a wide range of support services provided by all levels of government and community service agencies. Whitehorse has the Yukon's major acute care health facility and with it, regularly scheduled visits by medical specialists.

Whitehorse is also the base of social service agencies such as Yukon Family Services and the Child Development Centre. These agencies, along with many others, are the backbone of social service delivery. Whitehorse has a wealth of active and vital non-profit social service providers that offer support to young families. To the extent possible, these agencies try to make services available to families in the rural communities.

Families living outside of the urban centre rely primarily on community health nurses, regional social workers and the First Nation governments for services. In addition, local governments may provide a range of services to residents. Through regular visits by Whitehorse-based service providers, rural communities have access to

some Whitehorse-based programs, such as early intervention provided by the Child Development Centre. In addition, families can access services in Whitehorse by travelling to the city.

Yukon Indicators of Child Well-being

There are data gaps in a number of areas that limit the extent to which the Yukon can report on child well-being, however, the available data sheds some light on the Yukon children. As noted below, caution is required when reviewing this information given the very small numbers that the Yukon reports on. Nonetheless, the indicators of physical health (see table below) provide a piece to a developing picture of the health of Yukon children.

During the fiscal year 1999-2000, there were 363 live births in the Yukon. Close to 80% of these babies were born at a healthy birth weight. While the pre-term birth rate and percentage of low birth weights are lower than the Canadian rates, the Yukon data may be understated. This is likely due to the fact that pregnant women at risk of pre-term delivery will be transferred to a hospital outside of the territory with neonatal services. Births are registered in the province or territory in which the event occurs.

Indicators of physical health, and safety and security, Yukon and Canada, 1999-2000

Indicators of physical health	Yukon	Canada
Healthy births		
percentage of low birth weights (under 2500 grams)	3.03	5.6
percentage of high birth weights (over 4000 grams)	19.01	13.1
percentage of pre-term births (under 37 weeks)	3.58	7.3
Immunization (number of reported cases)		
Meningococcal Group C disease	0	10
Haemophilus Influenza b (Hlb)	0	14
Measles	0	11
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	0	5.3
Hospitalization due to injury (per 100,000 child admissions)	9.4	-

Source: Yukon Department of Health and Social Services; Government of Canada Report, The Well-being of Canada's Young Children.

Notes on Yukon data

- Yukon raw numbers are very small. When "rates" are calculated, one case in the Yukon can dramatically alter the reported "rate."
- There is one hospital in the Yukon that provides general acute care. Specialist services are available on a visiting basis. Medevacs and medical travel to Edmonton and Vancouver are used when services are not available locally. Services received outside the Yukon are not reflected in these data. These cases would be reflected in data of other jurisdictions.

PART 3: YUKON EXPENDITURES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

In 2001-02 the Yukon government received an additional $288,000 under the ECD initiative to support new and enhanced programs for young children and their families. The government consulted with Yukon social service agencies to determine the most effective areas to invest the new funds over the five-year period. The government received substantial input that was compiled by the Health & Social Services Council and reviewed by a ministerial committee.

Based on this consultation, the Yukon government decided to invest in two existing program — the Healthy Families program and the Child Development Centre — with proven success and support across the territory. In addition, a small enhancement was provided to the Yukon government's Child Care Services program.

HEALTHY FAMILIES PROGRAM

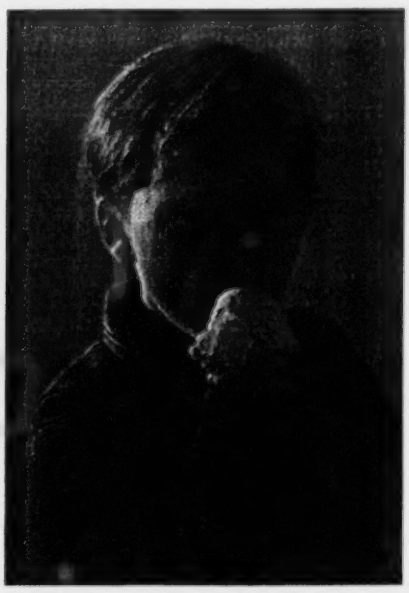
The Yukon government, through the department of Health & Social Services, initiated the Healthy Families program in 1999. This early intervention program, delivered directly by family support workers, provides families in the Whitehorse area with a new, pro-active service assisting new parents to cope with some of the challenges of parenting.

The Healthy Families program identifies overburdened families at the earliest stages. This can occur at the pre-natal stage or immediately following birth. The focus of the program is on families most in need of support. The program is voluntary and provides intensive home-based family support to parents of newborns.

What we are doing at the Healthy Families program

	1999	2000	2001
Screened births	206	251	208
Positive assessments	23	47	40
New admissions	18	41	39
Total children in program	18	54	76
Children ages 0-1	18	40	34
Children ages 1-2	0	14	26
Children ages 2-3	0	0	16

Source: Yukon Department of Health and Social Services



The goals of the Healthy Families program are to:

- systematically assess the strengths and needs of new parents and assist them in accessing community services as needed;
- enhance family functioning by building trusting relationships, teaching problem solving, and improving the family's support system;
- promote positive parent-child relationships; and,
- promote healthy childhood growth and development.

Yukon Child Development Centre

The Yukon Child Development Centre (CDC) operates as a non-government organization with an independent board of directors. The CDC receives funding from various sources, including the Yukon government, to work with pre-school children with developmental challenges.

The CDC has three priority goals:

1. *Early intervention:* To promote and provide the assessment and treatment planning and/or consultation for pre-school children with developmental difficulties within six months of problem identification.
2. *Family-focused programs:* To provide family-focused services to enhance the capabilities of families in meeting their child's special needs as well as supporting them in meeting the family challenges of caring for a young child with special needs.
3. *Community integration:* To promote and support the delivery of services at the community level in order to enhance the capabilities of communities to support children with special needs placed in community programs.

The CDC accomplishes these goals through a wide range of services.

1. *Direct services:* The centre provides direct service through a family-focused intervention and treatment program. This service is provided through assessments, home-visits with families, support services to child care providers, and direct therapy to infants. These services are available to rural Yukon families through an outreach program.
2. *Training of caregivers:* The CDC works with other service providers to support and train caregivers for children with special needs.
3. *Parent support:* Programs are offered through the CDC to parents using support groups, a resource library, and transportation assistance when necessary.
4. *Public education:* Promotion of early intervention through community awareness activities, involvement of volunteers, collaborative programs with other service providers and regular contact with referral agencies.

What we are doing at the Child Development Centre

2001-02
521 referrals
43% rural
56% Whitehorse
29% of population ages 0-4 are receiving services

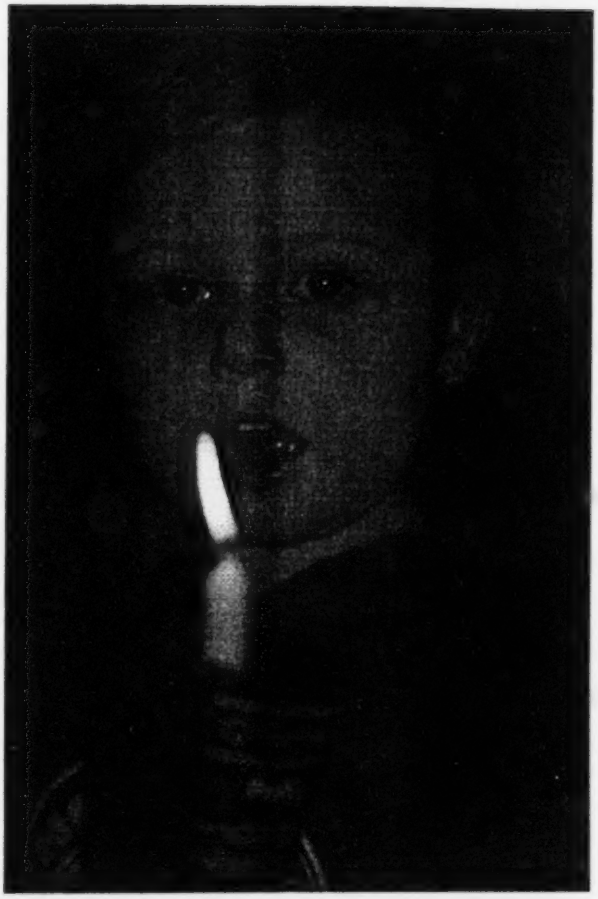
Source: Child Development Centre Annual Report 2001-02

YUKON CHILD CARE SERVICES UNIT

The Child Care Services Unit is part of the Department of Health & Social Services. The Unit ensures quality, accessible and comprehensive child care services for Yukon children and families. Services include licensing and monitoring of child care programs, child care subsidies to eligible families, and direct operating grants to licensed child care facilities.

Hot lunch program at licensed family day homes

As part of the Yukon's first allocation of the early childhood development funding made available under the ECD initiative, $24,000 was provided to the Direct Operating Grant program specifically to support provision of hot lunches at licensed day homes. The Yukon government had previously increased the direct operating grants to child care centres to support a hot lunch program. The ECD funding enabled 45 licensed day homes to serve hot lunches to close to 300 Yukon children.



Summary of ECD funding 2001-2002

		Day home hot lunch program	Healthy Families program	Child Development Centre
2000-2001	Baseline investment	—	$352,000	$1,151,000
2001-2002	**Yukon government program expenditure**		**$504,000**	**$1,151,000**
	Federal ECD funding ($288,000)	**$24,000**	**$192,000**	**$72,000**
	Total program expenditures	**$24,000**	**$696,000**	**$1,223,000**

PART 4: YUKON'S ACTIVITIES AND EXPENDITURES IN ECD

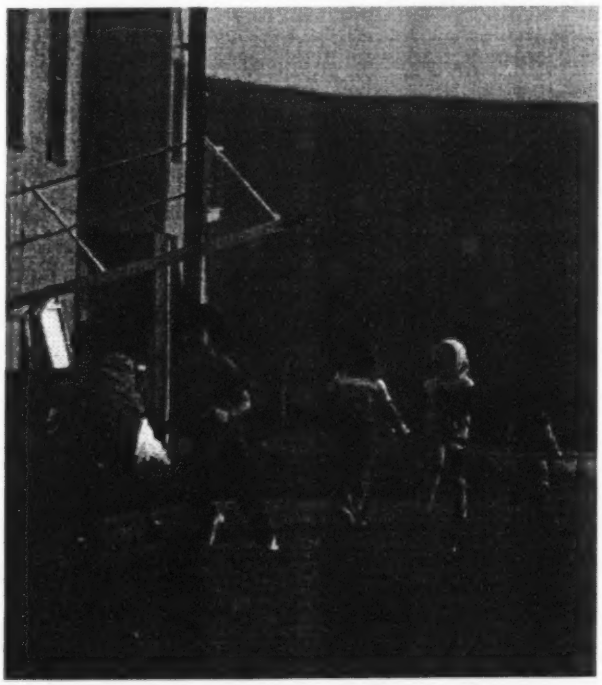
The Yukon government is committed to working with the community to ensure quality health and social services for Yukon children and their families. This is achieved by helping families and children to acquire the skills to live responsible, active, healthy and independent lives. The department of Health & Social Services provides a range of accessible, sustainable services that are in place to assist families, children and the community to reach their full potential.

The following is an overview of some of the Health & Social Services programs and services that fall under the four key areas for action committed under the ECD initiative. These programs and activities focus on early intervention and supports to young children and their families.

SUPPORT TO YUKON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

1. Promote healthy pregnancy, birth and infancy

COMMUNITY HEALTH CLINICS: Health centres in Yukon communities offer regular prenatal and well-baby clinics. These clinics are provided under the guidance of the Community Health Nurse or Health Practitioner. Often the clinics are provided co-operatively with the First Nation Community Health Representative.



FASD PREVENTION: Various agencies within the Yukon government undertake activities in an effort to prevent Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD). Alcohol and Drug Services focuses on prevention of FASD through ongoing work of the Prevention & Education Unit. Staff work with students and community groups on the long-term effects of substance abuse.

The Yukon government, along with the governments of the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and Manitoba share information and expertise to develop more effective approaches to addressing the issue of FASD.

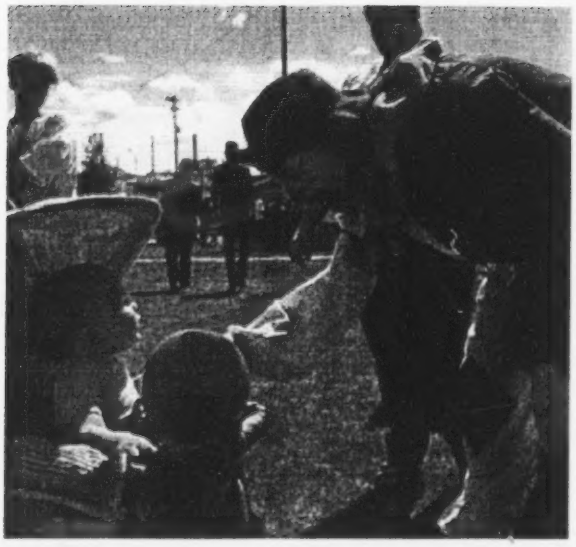
The Yukon Liquor Corporation sponsors a media campaign focused on the harmful effects of alcohol on unborn children. Labels are placed on all alcohol containers.

2. Improve parenting and family supports

CHILD CARE SERVICES: Child Care Services Unit promotes development of accessible, affordable quality child care for families in all Yukon communities. Programs are designed to help individual families and licensed child care facilities including child care centres and family day homes.

FAMILY & CHILDREN SERVICES: This branch of Health & Social Services works to promote, strengthen and sustain effective parenting and positive family functioning. Services include family supports such as early identification of family problems and early intervention to prevent family breakdown.

INCOME SUPPORTS FOR YOUNG FAMILIES: The Yukon Child Benefit is designed to ensure low income families in the Yukon receive financial support to help with the costs of raising children.



3. Strengthen early childhood development, learning and care

Child Development Centre: The Yukon government provides an annual contribution to support the Centre in providing services throughout the Yukon. The Centre provides support services to families and preschool children with developmental challenges.

Healthy Families program: The Healthy Families program is an early intervention program that began in March, 1999. The program is designed to provide one-to-one support for children and families prenatally and/or at birth through to school age.

4. Strengthen community supports

Supports to social service agencies: The Yukon government works in partnership with a variety of non-government organizations. The government recognizes the important role these community-based agencies play in providing social services in the Yukon. The following agencies annually work in partnership with the government to provide support services to Yukon families and young children:

- Yukon Family Services Association provides counselling and support services to Yukon families (including parenting programs, group and individual counselling).
- Skookum Jim Friendship Centre provides culturally appropriate parenting support and lay-counselling to families.
- Teen Parent Centre supports teen moms and their children.
- Child Development Centre provides early intervention services to preschool children and their families.
- Kids' Recreation Fund assists low income families to access sport and recreation programs.
- Food for Learning provides funding to Yukon schools so that food can be provided to students who are in need.

Overall Yukon expenditures in early childhood development

ECD action area	Baseline (revised)	2001-02
Pregnancy, birth and infancy	$379,000	$383,000
Parenting and family supports	$6,802,000	$6,914,000
Early childhood development, learning and care	$352,000	$696,000
Community supports	$2,024,000	$2,097,000
Total ECD investment	**$9,556,000**	**$10,090,000**

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